
in the matter of: the Resource Management Act 1991

and

in the matter of: an application by the Central Plains Water Trust to take water from the Waimakariri River

and applications by the Central Plains Water Trust to use water from the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers and for all associated consents required for the construction and operation of the Central Plains Water Enhancement Scheme

in the matter of: a Notice of Requirement by Central Plains Water Limited to the Selwyn District Council for the designation of land for works associated with the construction and operation of the Central Plains Water Enhancement Scheme

Brief of evidence of Ronald David Keating

Dated: 19 June 2008

Chapman Tripp *Barristers & Solicitors*

119 Armagh St Tel +64 3 353 4130
PO Box 2510 Fax +64 3 365 4587
Christchurch NZ DX WP21035

Reference: JM Appleyard (jo.appleyard@chapmantripp.com)
BG Williams (ben.williams@chapmantripp.com)

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF RON KEATING

Introduction

- 1 My full name is Ronald (Ron) David Keating.
- 2 I am the Mayor of the Waimakariri District Council (*WDC*) and I live at Clarkville.
- 3 I hold the degree of Bachelor of Agricultural Science. Up until I was elected Mayor of Waimakariri District Council last year, I was a Registered Primary Industries Consultant (Resource Management) and a Member of the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural Science. I practised on my own account as an Agricultural Consultant for 40 years. Over that time I specialised in the field of Land Use Planning under the Town & Country Planning Act and since its enactment, the Resource Management Act 1991 and its amendments.
- 4 Personal knowledge and experience which is relevant to this hearing relates to practical experience involving the agricultural and horticultural use of land - particularly in Canterbury and elsewhere across New Zealand. In a period of some 35 years I was an expert witness associated with many land use planning appeals. These include large mining and hydro-electric projects.
- 5 I am presenting this evidence in support of the submissions of WDC and the Kaiapoi Community Board lodged in opposition to the Central Plains scheme. Throughout this evidence I will simply refer to these as "*WDC*" rather than repeating both entities and their respective interests.
- 6 I also note that although the submissions are in opposition, WDC is not opposed to Central Plains in the absolute sense. It does however have significant concerns around the impact of what, in any context, is a very large take from the Waimakariri River.

The Waimakariri District

- 7 The Waimakariri District lies to the north of the Waimakariri River in North Canterbury. The district occupies some 225,000 hectares, and extends from Pegasus Bay in the east to the Puketeraki Range in the west. It is bounded to the north by the Hurunui District.
- 8 The major urban areas in the district are Kaiapoi and Rangiora. The district's other main urban areas include Woodend and Oxford and a developing town at Pegasus. There are also a number of smaller villages and beach settlements.

- 9 The District has a population of approximately 45,100 people. This is projected to grow to 56,000 by 2016. Its proximity to Christchurch also means that there is a significant weekend and recreational interest in the District, its landscapes and, most importantly for present purposes, the Waimakariri River.
- 10 The district has few major industries and despite recent rapid growth, the District retains its rural/small town character. Most of the people living in the District are there because of this character, and almost all share a genuine concern over the wellbeing of the River.
- 11 The Waimakariri River is the District's most iconic river and demands the best and highest quality management. Not only is it what the district is named after, but it is also well known for its ecology and amenity as a free flowing braided river and for its recreational value throughout New Zealand.
- 12 WDC and the wider community also have a much more critical and direct interest in the water in the river. As has been set out in the evidence of Mr Callander and Mr Young, there are two significant and direct interests in Waimakariri water:
- 12.1 For use in stockwater schemes throughout the district; and
- 12.2 For aquifer recharge and town and community water supply.
- 13 Both are absolutely crucial to the District's wellbeing and its future success.

Interest in Central Plains

- 14 WDC is obviously part of the wider Canterbury Region and it naturally seeks to advance and support the development of all of Canterbury.
- 15 The Council does not want to prevent or outright oppose the development of irrigation in the Selwyn District and Christchurch City Council areas. However, it is of the view that such development cannot be allowed to occur at the expense of the Waimakariri River and its communities.

Impacts on the river

- 16 From what I understand there still appears to be some, or possibly even considerable, uncertainty around what the actual long-term impact of the CPW scheme will be. With possibility up to 40 cumecs being taken during periods of higher flows, variable sluicing and flushing regimes, and a more constant minimum flow (if all other abstractors are also taking), WDC is concerned that the large scale nature of the CPW abstraction is such that the effects of getting the decision wrong could be both catastrophic and irreversible.
- 17 On this basis, WDC hopes a very low tolerance is given to any uncertainty. This must be addressed through very strict conditions, or if this is not achievable, the applications should be declined.
- 18 Another concern of WDC is the possibility of CPW locking up the resource. Foreseeably, the CPW take is likely to be the last remaining application of any significance on the Waimakariri River. It is also likely to be the application that will prevent a range of other possible future uses of the River. Although accepting that this is the way the Resource Management Act works, WDC hopes that the Commissioners are particularly cautious in that if consents are granted, only an adequate and efficient allocation is granted to CPW.
- 19 Given the discussions around the expense and logistics of constructing the CPW scheme, WDC is also of the view that the Commissioners should select the shortest lapse period reasonably required to construct the scheme.
- 20 By means of comparison, the Waimakariri Irrigation Limited (18,000ha) scheme discussed in the evidence of Mr Clemens was constructed around 1999 with an initial capital cost of approximately \$7 million – significantly less than that currently proposed for CPW. Although WDC does not seek to challenge the economics behind the CPW scheme, it might suggest that there could be a delay before construction even begins or that the proposal may be developed across a very long construction period. During this time CPW would need sufficient time to gather the funds that would be needed to both begin and then complete construction of the scheme.
- 21 It is also possible that during this time CPW might still want to take some water in which case CPW may seek to run parts of the scheme on a partial basis. If CPW were unsuccessful in gaining such funds or decided not to complete construction then it might be good to provide a mechanism for other interests to access the resource.

Groundwater

- 22 As has been set out in the evidence of Mr Callander and Mr Young, the entire WDC area is reliant on a number of groundwater wells for domestic and town & community water supply. It appears to be acknowledged that the CPW application will have an affect on Waimakariri River groundwater recharge on the south bank. It is WDC's view that this must have an equivalent, and possibly equal impact on the north bank which so far has gone relatively undiscussed in the application.
- 23 WDC also has a specific interest in two significant stockwater takes and a more general interest in Waimakariri Irrigation Limited and its contribution to the region. WDC is therefore particularly concerned about any changes to the river that affect reliability of supply to existing river abstractions (including WIL) and the Kaiapoi aquifer system.
- 24 The final matter of concern is the safety of river users. WDC has a range of safety issues around the CPW intake, sediment flushing discharges, by-wash discharges, and the need to protect river users.
- 25 This could include relatively sudden changes in river level, and other changes to water clarity. More general issues could be changes associated with water quality and the 'dilution factor' currently afforded by the extent of existing consents on the Waimakariri River. And in the long-term, changes to bed levels and flooding regimes could start to affect the existing flood protection works in the river.
- 26 It is therefore likely that without an appropriate flow regime being implemented, strict conditions around use, warning systems and ongoing monitoring then the operation of the CPW scheme could lead to safety issues with existing river users.

Conclusion

- 27 Overall, WDC hopes the Hearing Panel is particularly cautious in its approach to the CPW applications.

- 28 Although the CPW scheme has the potential to deliver benefits to wider Canterbury, it also has the potential to do significant damage to the ecology, amenity and existing abstractive values of the Waimakariri River.

Dated: 19 June 2008

Ron Keating